



# **SPOKANE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

## **CHIEF OF POLICE**

### **CRAIG N. MEIDL**

## **Strategic Initiatives**

### **June 2021 Report**



## **Public Safety and Community Health Committee Briefing**

### **June 7, 2021**

## Selected Excerpts of Officer Commendations

At a time when most police departments are under a microscope and the behavior of each officer scrutinized for anything less than perfect, it is easy to overlook the good events that never hit the media and remain unknown. For example, this year a large man in his thirties began stepping into traffic. The man was in the midst of a mental crisis, distraught, disorientated, and at risk. He had been walking for most of that Saturday. He was dehydrated and hadn't eaten all day. He was not violent, but very much afraid, and consequently resistant to help from the officers who arrived on the scene. In his state of confusion, communication with the man was difficult. He knew he needed help, wanted to go to a hospital...then didn't want that and resisted any advice of the officers. Prudently, the officers were forced to take the man to the ground—the six foot three man who weighed 280 pounds. Later, it took the combined effort of three officers and several firefighters to place the man on an ambulance gurney. He was admitted to Sacred Heart, and subsequently received treatment for his illness. This could be the story of any street person, but it wasn't. It was a crisis in the life of my son. It could have ended in a very tragic night for my family. But it didn't. Thanks to the wisdom and timely intervention of **Officer Schott-1352** and **Officer Guzzo-1244**, a man received what he didn't want, but desperately needed. Force was required. But it was force that saved a man's life, and amazingly— with no stitches, bruises, or sprains. Unfortunately, my son remembers little of that evening. However, on behalf of my family, please convey our deep thanks to the officers involved. It was a perfect event from my standpoint, a reflection of the department and the officers who responded.

I was involved in a traffic incident yesterday morning, I failed to yield the right of way and hit a nice young lady, her car was stuck in the middle of the road and we called 911 for assistance. **Officer Dean Draper** arrived, contacted a tow company, collected our information, gave me a citation and helped calm or comfort the young lady I hit. I just want to say that I was very impressed with Mr. Draper, first of all, with his willingness to help, his professionalism and how he presented himself. Other officers arrived and were also very professional and friendly. In this strange world we are living in I need to provide this feedback to you. It's important because I feel Law Enforcement is being labeled and treated unfairly, and when citizens like myself get to see firsthand the benefits of having people like Dean there to help in the event of an emergency, it really makes me feel fortunate and confident that our community is in good hands. He is a professional and a great representation of your department.

A shout out to **Officer Ron Voeller**, again. He is consistently amazing and effective with our clients and all collaterals involved. He is a huge asset on every assignment I have been lucky enough to have him on. I cannot say enough positive things about his skills and compassion demonstrated every time.

**Officer Brandon Roy** responded to the residential burglary of my home. I was very impressed with his professional demeanor. He was genuinely friendly and courteous. He was precise in gathering all the facts about the incident. I felt that Officer Roy was sincerely concerned about my loss of the items taken. After finishing his report information, he was thoughtful enough to take the time to walk through some excellent ways I might prevent this kind of theft from reoccurring. Officer Brandon Roy is a fine tribute to your force and an excellent reflection of the Spokane Police Department!



## Internal Affairs Unit Update

### January 1 through April 30, 2021 Commendations and Complaints

Commendations Received:    **Total: 47**

Complaints Received:        **Total: 19 (13 from community)**

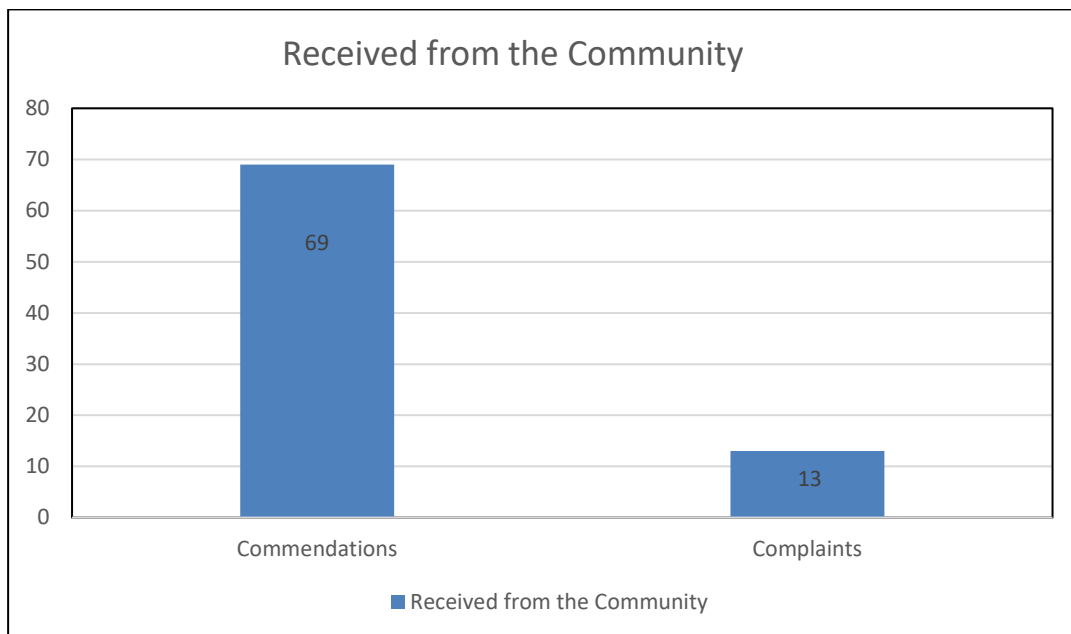
**Closed Out as Inquiries: 1 (As of April 30, 2021)**

*An inquiry is an initial complaint about employee conduct which, even if true, would not qualify as a personnel complaint and may be handled informally by a department supervisor and shall not be considered complaints.*

### Source of Complaints—January 1 through April 30, 2021

Received by the Office of Police Ombudsman	<b>Total: 1</b>
Received by the Spokane Police Department	<b>Total: 18</b>
Internally Generated by the SPD	<b>Total: 6</b>
Generated by the Community	<b>Total: 13</b>

As of April 30, the department has received 84% more commendations from the community than complaints.



## **Use of Force Update**

### **2021 Non-Deadly Reportable Use of Force Incidents**

From January 1-April 30, 2021, there were 19 non-deadly use of force incidents- 2 K9 contacts and 17 other (e.g., TASER).

### **2021 Deadly Force Incidents (Officer-Involved Shootings)**

From January 1-April 30, 2021, there were two deadly force incidents.

#### **Incident 2021-20002320 (Under Investigation)**

Incident 2021-20002320 took place on January 5, 2021 in the area of 5100 N Ash. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) is conducting the criminal investigation.

#### **Incident 2021-20059960 (Under Investigation)**

Incident 2021-20059960 took place on 2021, in the area of 500 S Cannon. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) is conducting the criminal investigation.

### **2020 Deadly Force Incidents (Officer-Involved Shootings)**

From January 1-December 31, 2020, there were three deadly force incidents.

#### **Incident 2020-20136616 (pending review by Chief Meidl)**

Incident 2020-20136616 took place on August 7, 2020 in the area of Courtland/Crestline. The criminal investigation is by the Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) team is complete. The Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force justified. The SPD administrative investigation is complete. Chief Meidl is reviewing the administrative investigation.

#### **Incident 2020-20160038 (Under Investigation)**

Incident 2020-20160038 took place on September 11, 2020 in the 6300 block of East Broadway. The criminal investigation is being conducted by the Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR).

#### **Incident 2020-20168741 (Under Administrative Investigation)**

Incident 2020-20168741 took place on September 24, 2020 in the 9000 block of Highway 2. The criminal investigation by the Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) is complete. SPD is conducting an administrative investigation.

### **2019 Officer-Involved Shooting Incidents Update (through December 31, 2020)**

These incidents took place in 2019 but are still pending the Deadly Force Review Board- delayed by COVID-19 protocols.

**Incident 2019-20124831 (Pending Deadly Force Review Board- delayed by COVID-19 protocols)**

Incident 2019-20124831 occurred on July 6, 2019, in the 1400 block of West 9<sup>th</sup>. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) team criminal investigation is complete. The County Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force as justified. Internal Affairs completed the administrative investigation. The case will be reviewed by a Deadly Force Review Board in June 2021.

**Incident 2019-20201879 (Pending Deadly Force Review Board- delayed by COVID-19 protocols)**

Incident 2019-20201879 occurred on October 23, 2019, in the 3400 block of East Garnet. The Spokane Independent Investigative Response (SIIR) team criminal investigation is complete. The County Prosecutor ruled the use of deadly force as justified. Internal Affairs completed the administrative investigation. The case will be reviewed by a Deadly Force Review Board.

### Items of Interest

#### Behavioral Health Unit

The Spokane Regional Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) is comprised of Spokane Police Officers, Spokane County Sheriff's Office/Spokane Valley Deputies, and Frontier Behavioral Health Mental Health Professionals.

#### Statistics for the month of March 2021

- BHU responded to 157 BHU calls for service, 34 suicidal calls, and 99 welfare calls for service.
- BHU contacted 52 individuals for follow-up.
- 0.8 % of contacts resulted in an arrest.
- No use of force was used beyond handcuffing.
- 23% of calls resulted in Involuntary Detentions.
- 44% of calls resulted in a referral for other services.
- BHU responded to a total of 554 calls for service, allowing other patrol units to take other calls.

#### Anecdotal Story of Success

Patrol responded to a male diagnosed with bipolar disorder who had called 911 stating he was suicidal and armed with multiple firearms. He also stated he would kill anyone who tried to stop him. Patrol and BHU utilized family members to de-escalate the situation and get the male outside of his residence and unarmed. The male's behavior was erratic, and he broke out of four-point restraints while in the ambulance, causing officers to hold him down. The male was transported to the hospital and released within 24 hours. Within a couple of days, 911 received multiple calls for service from the male stating he was suicidal with a gun; these reports were proven to be false. The male was on DOC Supervision for assaulting health care workers and mental health staff. He had recently been released from prison with limited conditions of release.

BHU officers were notified of this male. Within 36 hours, the male called in stating he had overdosed on pills. BHU officers staged in the area and were able to coordinate with family again. It was apparent the male was playing possum, trying to lure officers close to him, so he could run them over with his car. He was quickly angered and sped away stating he would drive himself to the hospital when officers did not



take the bait. He drove past officers while leaving the area and did not stop. He later showed up at a local ER where officers responded and detained him. The male was transported to a psych triage facility nearby. At the facility, he threatened to kill staff and law enforcement. He said, "The only good cop is a dead one." The male is very large in stature and very muscular from his time in prison. His physical stature and demeanor made him a very viable threat. While under evaluation and treatment, the male made a shank out of a spoon and stated he wanted to kill the BHU Sergeant. He planned to stab the BHU Sergeant in the neck. This forced law enforcement to respond to him again. He was transported back up to the hospital. He spent 14 days in isolation and was very verbally aggressive towards staff. He routinely would threaten staff and law enforcement. It was apparent that he was off his medication and was not in control of his behavior.

The BHU coordinated with family members to help convince the male to take his medication. Medicated, he was not as dangerous to deal with on a day-to-day basis. His father agreed to take over as a power of attorney for him and agreed to ensure he would stay medicated. After nearly 20 days in the hospital, he was released into the care of his family. The father was very supportive of coordinating efforts with the BHU to prevent this type of behavior from happening in the future. There was no force used on the male. The BHU had multiple meetings with hospital staff, doctors, and family members to assist in getting this male medicated. All parties agreed he is a very dangerous person off his medication. Since this coordinated effort, there have been no calls for service involving this individual.

BHU Officer Ron Voeller was recognized as the 2020 Employee of the Year in April 2021



Ron Voeller has been a patrol officer with the Spokane Police Department for nearly 20 years. He works hard, strives to do his best and is extremely reliable. Officer Voeller consistently strives to represent the department in the best light possible by representing the values of integrity, professionalism, and compassion. His presence is very calming to those in crisis.

After nearly 20 years of working patrol, Officer Voeller applied for a position with the Regional Behavioral Health Unit. As a member of the unit, he exemplifies what it means to be professional and show compassion to those in crisis. Officer Voeller treats everyone he comes in contact with an enormous amount of respect earning him a great amount of respect. His co-deployed clinicians from Frontier Behavioral Health love working with him because he is so punctual and reliable. As with any new program, there are struggles. Officer Voeller has been an invaluable team member helping problem solve and implement procedures. He is respected by community agencies and is often requested by them because of his consistent hard work.

Officer Voeller strives to answer up for calls on the radio, assisting patrol and constantly demonstrating a contagious work ethic to young officers. While a former member of the Dignitary Protection Team, he shows great patience and guidance with both younger officers and those he contacts on the street.



### Spokane Police Academy Staff Receive Chief's Citation Award

During the third week of March 2020, the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC) Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA 804) was beginning week five of seventeen in Spokane at our Training Center. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to rise in virulence and uncertainty, on March 17, in the interest of student and staff safety, WSCJTC Executive Director Sue Rahr ordered the immediate closure of both the Burien and Spokane BLEA campuses. 36 student recruits from multiple eastern Washington agencies went home from Spokane to await further instructions, their long-awaited and fought-for careers in law enforcement on an indefinite hold.

WSCJTC Executive Director Sue Rahr tasked her staff in Spokane with creating a way to re-open BLEA 804 with an eye to maximum possible safety in light of what scientists began discovering about COVID-19. At the time, COVID-19 medical knowledge was a moving target. The effectiveness of various types of facemasks was uncertain, what disinfectants might be effective to help stop the virus' spread were unknown, and the phrase and practice "social distancing" was an unheard of concept. The rules about how many people could be in one place at one time, and under what circumstances, changed on a near-daily basis. The Spokane-BLEA campus, staffing, and instructional models were never designed for these circumstances.

Working together and utilizing an "out-of-the-box" problem-solving method, the BLEA Assistant Commander, TAC Officers, Course Instructors, and ancillary staff such as Mock Scene Evaluators and Range Safety Officers, designed a "Triple-BLEA" plan: they split BLEA 804 into three groups. Each group's instruction took place in different physical locations, and classroom and skills-based courses all juggled around each other in the Triple-BLEA schedule in order to retain the instructional flow of a standard 720-hour BLEA. BLEA staff would often facilitate an instructional topic for four hours in one location in the morning, and then travel across town to teach the same topic to another group. Personnel constantly adjusted work and personal life schedules to accomplish this feat.

Over the five months from March 2020 through July 2020, the Spokane-BLEA training cadre became itinerant instructors. Courses were constantly re-scheduled, re-located, and re-worked so delivery of the entire content of a normal 720-hour BLEA in the exceptional manner to which our statewide stakeholders are accustomed. This was all done with full COVID-19 safety compliance protocols, and no students or staff became affected. Additionally, even though the full re-start of BLEA 804 was two months delayed, the class graduated all 36 students only one month after the pre-set graduation date, much to the surprise and relief of our partnering agencies.

The Training Center staff named below were integral to this enormous success in the face of the aforementioned, extraordinary challenges. Their ingenuity, dedication, and sacrifices for the greater good enabled communities across Washington State to receive their new Peace Officers back as quickly and well trained as possible despite the COVID-19 global crisis.

Sergeant David L. Adams, WSCJTC Assistant Commander, Domestic Violence Lead Instructor  
Sergeant HJ Whapeles, Spokane CSO, WSCJTC TAC Officer, Blue Courage Lead Instructor & Patrol Tactics  
Officer Daniel Strassenberg, WSCJTC TAC Officer, Patrol Tactics Lead Instructor  
Officer Cory Lyons, WSCJTC TAC Officer, Firearms Lead Instructor & Patrol Tactics  
Ms. Holly Hocking, Clerk II, Class Scheduling, Logistics, and Coursework Requirement Verification



## Precinct Highlights

### **North Precinct**

#### Collaboration with Neighborhood Residents Addressing Quality of Life Issues

- During the month of April NRO Tim Schwering had 21 abandoned vehicles towed. The vehicles were associated with 259 calls for service. From the start of the year, he has towed 90 vehicles.
- One NRO dealt with an ongoing neighborhood dispute that has lasted several years. Some neighbors were sure that another neighbor had put a listening device on AVISTA poles and AVISTA took them down. The NRO had neighbors get the pole numbers that the listening device were removed from. He contacted AVISTA with the pole numbers. They did a 90-day search for work in that area and they have not done any, to include any subcontractors. There was no credibility to the rumors.
- Several calls resulted in referrals to the Behavioral Health Unit.
- One particular nuisance house involved Domestic Violence issues and harassment of neighbors. The NRO followed up on an anti-harassment call and developed probable cause for that harassment case as well as new PC for a Domestic Violence Order of Protection Violation charge.

#### Crime Prevention Missions

Street racing on Division and reckless driving/trespassing in closed parking lots such as the old Shopko has been an ongoing summer problem. In response, SPD will be conducting several enforcement specials to curb this problem before summer hits.

### **Downtown Precinct**

#### Notable Arrests

- A Neighborhood Resource Officer, Seth Killian, was assisting with litter cleanup when he spotted a suspiciously nice bicycle among otherwise low value items. He began asking questions about who owned it and how they purchased it. After discovering the story was suspicious, he seized the bicycle. NRO Killian worked with Specialized to locate the local Spokane dealer. He eventually found the owner through an email address. The bike was stolen earlier in the day at 7-Eleven 177 S Division when the owner was on his way home after work around midnight. NRO Killian later located the suspect and arrested her for Possession of Stolen Property.
- Officers responded to a male camping behind Shalom Ministries (518 W. 3rd Ave). The male was high on meth and swinging a steak knife around in the rear parking lot. The male refused to drop the knife or comply with officer commands. The suspect was taken to jail for trespassing and for an active DOC warrant. He had numerous used open-capped needles on him.
- An officer contacted an individual in the Cedar Viaduct with an Assault warrant. The male ran. A few hours later, the officer located him again. Although he was under the influence of drugs, the officer arrested him without incident.

#### Crime Prevention Missions





The Downtown Precinct has been focusing on the Stevens-Post/Main-Sprague area, providing education and enforcement when needed. Several arrests involved suspects who had felony warrants from other jurisdictions. Precinct staff assisted the Homeless Camping POD in the cleanup at 4th/Spokane.

## South Precinct

### Collaboration with Neighborhood Residents Addressing Quality of Life Issues

- The South Precinct's three NROs received 201 referrals for neighborhood issues during the month of April, up from 137 in March 2021.
- Precinct staff participated in the Homeless Camping POD.
- Neighborhood Resource Officers have been working on a residence in the Perry District and the issues have been resolved. Four total properties were resolved in the last two months, due to the precinct's work with the owners. NROs are working on two nuisance residences on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the East Central neighborhood.
- NROs are also working on two business locations, along with the Civil Enforcement Unit.

### Crime Prevention Missions

The South Precinct's new mission will be the medical district in and around Providence addressing transient camps and Part 1 crimes. Captain Arleth reports that there was a slight reduction the first two weeks of the month. With warmer weather and an increase in transients, officers actually saw an increase in crime and calls for service in the second half of the month. Patrol did an outstanding job of working on the mission/hotspot area with 62 visits and a number of stops and arrests, yet still saw an increase in problems. The South Precinct is continuing to monitor this and work this area for the safety of residents and employees of the hospitals.

### Outreach Update



#### **Police Activities League (PAL) Summer Program Registration Opens**

PAL bridges the gap between Spokane Police officers and youth in our community through fun and educational summer activities such as STEM, Basketball, Track, Baseball, Flag Football, and Soccer. Spokane Public Schools Summer Meal Program provides lunches each day. PAL is held at neighborhood parks in West Central, East Central, and Hillyard.

PAL engages participating youth in positive athletic and academic programs, including gang and drug intervention and prevention. It's a collaborative program of Spokane Police Department, Spokane Parks Department, Spokane Public Schools, and many other organizations working together to supply a myriad of resources in a central location.

Please see flyer and registration form for more information.

<https://my.spokanecity.org/police/community-outreach/>

To register, please contact [SPDCommunityOutreach@spokanepolice.org](mailto:SPDCommunityOutreach@spokanepolice.org) or contact Campus Safety Specialist Ed Richardson at 509.354.5151 or [EdR@spokaneschools.org](mailto:EdR@spokaneschools.org)

### Police Activities League (PAL) Boxing Season



The Police Activities League Boxing program is going strong! Thanks to the support of the Spokane Police Foundation and its donors, several youth, with the support of police officers, were able to participate recently. The boxers are beginning to see results from their intensive training sessions that consist of cardio and technical instruction. The commitment has been impressive and we are proud of the work these young men are putting in to improve their health and better themselves as individuals. Thank you to Spokane Boxing Gym!

The Spokane Police Foundation funds food and equipment for the PAL Boxing program. Below, a photo of Rick Welliver, Spokane Boxing Gym, PAL Youth, and SPD Officers Micah Prim, Daniel Morley, and Marvin Cunningham. Not pictured: Officer Graig Butler.





**Read more about PAL Boxing:**

<https://my.spokanecity.org/news/stories/2021/05/07/police-build-relationships-in-boxing-ring/>

**'This is a safe place': Spokane Boxing hosts weekly workouts for teens with Police Activities League**

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2021/may/04/this-is-a-safe-place-spokane-boxing-hosts-weekly-w/>

Officer Butler's outreach at Hamblen Preschool



#### National Drug Take Back Day

The Community Outreach Unit organized the Police Department's participation in National Drug Take Back Day and participated alongside the DEA, the US Attorney's Office, The Northeast Support Team, The West Central Wellness Partnership, and the Shadle Wellness Coalition on April 24, 2021. There were three locations and over 300 pounds of medications were collected and destroyed.

#### Leadership Spokane

On April 26, 2021, the Community Outreach Unit met with the Leadership Spokane Youth for a 3 hour class on situational awareness and the purpose of police K9's. The class included a practical demonstration.

#### First YPI at Lumen High School

In June, the Community Outreach Unit will hold their first-ever YPI session at Lumen High School.

#### SPD "Face to Face" Event with Youth

This event is in the planning stages and is meant to build bridges of understanding between youth and police. It will involve about 150 youth and will be partially in-person and also live-streamed so families can watch from home. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 1620 E. 29<sup>th</sup> is organizing it. Chief Meidl and the Community Outreach Unit will be talking about how to become a police officer, what the job is like, and what trends they are seeing in the community, etc. Youth will propose questions for the Chief; two youth moderators will run the session and the Chief and officers will have an hour or so to discuss the youth's questions.

### Goats for the Wishing Star Foundation

Chief Meidl gets "goated" by none-less-than Fire Chief Schaeffer! A little friendly competition between the city's top chiefs, all to raise money for the Wishing Star Foundation. The non-profit grants wishes for children in our region with terminal, life-threatening or medically complicated conditions. SPD and SFD are pleased to be part of the effort. SPD's community outreach team will be "goating" as well!



### Notable News

**Does Spokane really have the 3rd deadliest police force in the nation?**

**One metric suggests it does, but Spokane's police chief says more context is required.**

This story explains the per capita math skews the data, according to Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl.

<https://www.krem.com/article/news/news-explainers/does-spokane-really-have-the-3rd-deadliest-police-force-in-the-nation/293-554bb271-7011-407d-8f52-5255d3c733af>

From the article:

*The statistic comes from a website called Mapping Police Violence. The site compiled data on people killed by police across America's 100 largest cities, between 2013 and 2020. Spokane had 17, an average of 2.125 police killings per year during that span.*

*But in order to be able to compare the 100 cities and control for population, the site did some simple math to calculate what is effectively a per-capita figure. Specifically, it extrapolated how many deaths there would be if every city had exactly a million people.*

*So the site calculated that based on the death rate, if Spokane had a million people, police would kill an average of 9.9 people per year. And that would in fact rank it third amongst those 100 cities.*

*"When you look at that, at face value, that would understandably have an emotional impact on a lot of people," said Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl.*

*Meidl doesn't dispute the hard data used by Mapping Police Violence. But he argues the way they analyzed it doesn't tell the full story. He posted a video outlining his complaints last week.*

<https://www.facebook.com/SpokanePD/videos/314934036892537/>

*"Spokane does not have a population of one million," he said in the video. "In order to get to that one million threshold that they use, we would have to multiply the Spokane population by almost five."*

*In doing this sort of per-capita math, Meidl says the data basically gets skewed.*

*"The smaller the sample, the bigger degree of change you're going to see with even one degree of change in that sample," he said.*

*For instance, Spokane police killed one Black person over the eight-year span. But if Spokane had one million Black people, that would equate to an average of 27.9 deaths per year.*

*"And though that figure may be mathematically correct based on that algorithm of a population of one million, when you provide the context of that data, which is using one African American death in eight years, I think that gives people a different perspective," said Meidl.*

*Furthermore, by choosing the top 100 cities, Spokane gets compared to enormous cities like New York and Los Angeles, but not similar-sized cities like Boise, or much smaller cities.*

*Still, the raw data does show Spokane's police force is deadlier than those in several far larger cities.*

*Those 17 deaths over eight years are still more than in places like Boston, Miami, and Tampa, which had 13, 13 and 11 killings respectively.*

*That's why Meidl acknowledges there's still a lot of work to do, and says managing use of force remains one of his top priorities.*

*"We're constantly looking at different ways of honing how our officers are engaging," he said. "[For instance] our use of force review boards, which every month looks at every single use of force."*

### **National Use of Force Dashboard by Police Strategies, LLC**

Bob Scales of Police Strategies, LLC, provided an assessment of the Mapping Police Violence data and the MPV rankings of the most violent police departments. He took the MPV data and created a series of dashboards that present the data.

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/policestrategies#!/vizhome/MPVComparisons/MPVPoliceKillingsData>



By ranking cities by reported crime, Scales found that Spokane PD ranks 3rd in deaths per million population but 43rd in deaths per 10,000 reported crimes.

[www.policestrategies.com](http://www.policestrategies.com)

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